

MARGRAVE, BACHELOR.

BY CLARA MAYNARD PARKER.

MANY of the qualities which unite to form the proverbial bachelor, that character in profile, met in Margrave, partly by inheritance, partly from environment. Numerous instances in his family history were to be found showing a matrimonial avoidance of the eternal feminine; indeed, on both sides of his house, as though Nature herself were insidiously arranging to keep Margrave from existing at all.

On second thoughts, however, she granted him the boon, handicapped by this doubly inherited instinct against matrimony.

The instinct was helped to survive by the unselfish devotion of his mother, who, marrying late in life and losing her husband soon after, centred her every thought and act about her boy. From his earliest childhood she had interposed between his mind and the possibility of its personal interpretation of the world a mental presence, a narrowing, obscuring con-

dition, which gave a certain obliqueness to his sight forever afterwards.

She never intended he should marry; he never intended to marry. Upon this point they were instinctively agreed. But in the divine economy of human nature, as no one character is ever quite allowed to appropriate and completely comprehend another, there were undiscovered countries of sensibility and possibility in Margrave never suspected by his dotting mother.

These spots grew a rank vegetation of fantasy, through whose marvellous jungle of kinds and colors flocked singing-bird thoughts of the opposite sex with healing in their wings for this lonely man. Sometimes one thought more vibrant than its mates would radiate its heat in a telltale smile of such glowing effulgence that an observer might say of the thinker, as of a fire-fly, "Lo! he is here!" or, "Lo! he is there!" but Margrave took care to be alone in his woods when this special form

of molecular vibration was likely to appear on the surface.

Margrave was something over forty years of age when his mother died. The clear-cut beardless face, with its dark shy eyes, might have suggested a younger man, but the suspicion of stoop that the shoulders had, and a certain gravity of manner and carriage, made him appear older and less tall than he was. His dress was always scrupulously neat, and generally black, except for the vaguest encroachment upon the spectrum in the presence of a thread of dark blue or green in his trousers and cravat. This concession to outward expression and general taste would indicate, on Margrave's barometer of social sensibility, mere amiability; a thread of yellow or red, familiarity; a polka dot on his cravat, a loud guilaw or a rude clap of the hand on a neighbor's back.

After the death of his mother, finding himself alone in a large house, its owner concluded to rent or sell it. Never accustomed to use more of anything than he actually required, he arranged to adjust his conditions to this modicum of necessity. He needed a dining-room and kitchen, for he ate; he needed a bedroom, for he slept; he needed a living-room for his books, his pictures, his few objects of beauty, which he possessed from a necessity almost as strong as that from which he breathed, ate, or slept. So a small but convenient apartment became his home.

Although Margrave was terribly afraid of the actual woman, his respect for her showed itself in pretty ways. He would step down off the platform of a street car, for instance, that she might more easily effect an entrance, and if it rained, he would unobtrusively secure her umbrella, and raise it or close it as the emergency demanded. If he happened to be in a downtown elevator, used for the most part by men, and a chance woman entered, one hat would be removed. There were countless little favors bestowed unobserved which resulted in comfort to the receiver, if not always in her clear understanding of just what caused the sudden absence of a too strong draught of air, the better ventilation of a room, or the handy proximity of a street-car strap. Whether he allowed himself these little acts deliberately, or whether they were the unguarded expression of a chivalric spirit, cannot be known. It is observable in

such constitutions as Margrave represented that a lionlike quality of wilful determination can lie down in the midst of those traits usually symbolized by lambs. It might be that his spirit, living so much in the abstract, in ideal attitudes of his own creation, craved actual embodiment, and hovered earthward in these little shapes of courtesy in search of reality.

It seemed to him that a child's ways meant the very key to everything worth possessing on earth, and he had been told that of such were the Kingdom of Heaven. His ways turned no locks. If his charity elicited a "thank you," he did not often hear it. Perhaps, under the management of the contrariety in his nature, he preferred not to hear his own keys turning locks, and for this reason sent his contributions anonymously to charities.

A child's touch or smile can do so much. One day in a street car the bachelor sat facing a small boy and his mother. The mother was instantly classed with the type of women he most revered. It was a strong, sweet face; the manner quiet, sympathetic, and painstaking as it expressed itself towards the child. Her dress was fine in every particular—to the gold bonnet-comb, the dainty silver filigree of the purse, the handle of the umbrella. All the points over which Margrave instinctively cast his critical searchlight reflected the possession of an instinct for form and quality as exacting as his own.

The child might have been three or five years of age, and was kneeling looking out of the window. He wore leather leggings. The heels of the shoes at the back were worn down. "A sturdy little man-ikin," was Margrave's summing up.

A moment later the boy bent his firm little body backward, hung an arm around the neck of his mother, and abruptly imprinted a loud kiss on her cheek. The business done, the privileged purloiner pressed his face against the glass window once more, leaving his hand in caressing possession of the field of his late operation.

Margrave found himself three blocks beyond his destination. These were margins he allowed himself. He stopped the car and walked slowly back to his street, used the wrong key to the door, with philosophic patience found the right one, and ascended the stairs to his rooms.

Excursions into his unsuspected coun-



"STRANGE THESE WHEELS DO NOT GO ROUND."

try of love of childhood he made quite openly. He left the bars down, so to speak, provided there was no intimidating live-stock happening around by way of mothers and sisters. He would spend afternoons in the Park, sitting on the end of a bench near the swan-pond, conscious that he was a species of decoy-drunk. He would pretend to be oblivious of the shy little men and maidens, who, catching sight of a quiet gentleman studying his watch, would draw up quite close to his knees after the manner of boldish sparrows after crumbs. Then he would say aloud, but softly, to himself, holding the bothersome watch to his ear, "Strange these wheels do not go round."

"Mebbe they do," chirped a venturesome sparrow close to his elbow; then, emboldened by a leader, three or four more sparrows would flutter close to him, and verily crowd between his knees in their greed for crumbs.

His pockets held many queer things, whose stories had to be told fast between the calls of the impatient French nurses, and the waiting relays of littler brothers and sisters, who, in the struggle "to see," were surviving as the non-fittest on the outside row, not to mention those out of

the race in baby-carriages, who intimated by ingratiating coos and futile jumps rudimentary symptoms of coming proficiency in the art of social competition.

There had been a hiatus in Margrave's own order of mental development, an absence of middle ground. The moral of Silverhair of the fairy-book had not been realized in his case. Life had been presented to him in the form of a "little wee bear" of motherly indulgence and pettings, followed by a "great big bear" of personal loneliness and intellectual and abstract musings, but the "middle-sized bear" of comfortable and adjustable commonplace, so called, had been denied him. The first acquaintance he had made with its special bowl and chair, suited to the human, was in this touch with childhood, and he was beginning to think that something on earth fitted him, and he it.

Margrave took infinite delight in bringing his words and entertainment within the comprehension of his youthful audience. He had seen life as a child under some form of telescope, his foreground made up of distant objects too big for him to digest; here there should be perfect adjustment, perfect proportion.

The objects he showed them were in

miniature. The small magnifying-glass revealed a little city carved on a surface not larger than a silver dollar. It had a cathedral with a bell-tower close by, and there were pigeons in the square.

In a back pocket, off by himself, lived a hermit in monk's clothes. He wore a rope around his waist, and his head was bald. He was brown, and was two inches high. One day the monk had a little bronze relief of a dog with him. He said Giotto, a friend of his, gave it to him; that his friend had carved one like it on the tower in the square where the pigeons were.

One thing always sent shivers of delight to all those fortunately near enough to see it, and those who could not see it got a shock of something pleasant in the air.

In a little silver case, which, closed, had the appearance of two silver fifty-cent pieces laid together, was a little lady the size of a small steel pen. She was dressed in green—shining green. Her clothes shivered; she shivered all over when her house was touched ever so lightly; and, sad as it was, she had her head shaken off, and new ones shaken on. Sometimes she wore curls, and again she appeared suddenly in a bonnet.

She lived in a vest pocket, with a small shell paper-cutter whose edges were supported by a row of Grecian columns with varying capitals. Out of her case on a moonlight night she could have leaned on it as on a balustrade and watched the stars, the showman said. The reason she didn't was because she was afraid of somebody in the next pocket.

"What is in the next pocket?"

"Oh, nothing much; just a man with red eyes and long black hair. He has a sword, and his slippers turn up in sharp points."

"I wouldn't be afraid of him!"

"Nor I." "Nor I." "Nor I wouldn't."

Another good place for sparrows and crinoids was the toy-shop windows before Christmas. Toys were a source of great pleasure to Margrave. They gave him the most delightful sense of reality. Nothing seemed truer outside the world of animate nature than a tin express-wagon, painted red, with a white horse. Why, he could not have told you. The figures "forever fair" on Keats's Grecian urn had no more immediate joy for the poet than this white horse forever running had for the simple consciousness of this child-lover. Rocking-horses with

real hair, go-carts, drays heavily laden with methodically shaped packages, woolly sheep, and frightful bears snapping white teeth and showing blood red jaws, gray donkeys nodding approval of any opinions one might express, always, for some unaccountable reason, made melody in the bachelor's heart, and once loud enough to be overheard; and thereby hangs our tale.

It was late one afternoon, a few days before Christmas. The bachelor found himself in a toy-shop, surrounded by everything that would gladden the thoughts of the best of mankind. It was, indeed, a veritable world in itself. How familiar its objects were! He heard the children's exclamations of delight; he saw the happy young fathers and mothers furtively consulting; the music-boxes were purring their miniature tunes; over all, through all, some universal impetus of love and charity was making its way. In a wave of indiscriminate self-indulgence, or pity, Margrave ordered one of the largest rocking-horses sent home, together with a box of good-sized wooden soldiers, and a cannon of robust proportions.

He stood by his guns bravely, and repeated the address to the dull clerk deliberately and very clearly, finally spelling his name for him—"Hubert Margrave."

It was not till he got well out of the neighborhood of the shops, into the quieter streets, that the grotesque side of his purchase occurred to him. He became nervously possessed with the idea that he was being pursued by the red-coated soldiers, the rocking-horse, and the cannon. He could almost hear the tramp, tramp, tramp, the progressive rocking of the horse, the booming of cannon at his heels. But there was a curtain between his inward dramas and the public. An even, cold manner, like the light fall of snow in one of Verestchagin's battle-pieces, did duty in allaying suspicion of the havoc beneath. An observer might note a familiar figure on the Avenue hastening a trifle more than was its wont, an acquaintance passing him might say that that man Margrave didn't grow more sociable with his years; but beyond this his manner gave no cause for speculation.

Hubert reached his apartment outwardly intact. By the time he had finished dressing for dinner, and recovered a nor-

mal mood by the perusal of a column of his evening paper, he was prepared to say to colored Anna, his faithful old family servant, that should a rocking-horse as big as a small pony arrive, she could tie it to the knob of the front door, or stand it on the dining-room table, or hang it out of the window, only taking care to give it a conspicuous place until further notice.

It was to arrive by the two-o'clock delivery the next day by agreement. Margrave made it convenient to be away from home. When he returned, later in the afternoon, he was met by Anna at the door with a wonderful story on her lips. "For de Lawd's sake, Massa Hub't, de curostest mistake—" But the most curious mistake was made by Anna, for her master, quietly ignoring her presence, strode past the open door of the dining-room without glancing to the right or left.

Anna made no mistake after this one. The rocking-horse, the object whose irrelevant entrance into the house had caused so much dismay and confusion in her mind, stood for many days where it had been first deposited, between the dining-room table and the window, its loose paper wrappings undisturbed.

It was a very inconvenient place, as Anna obtrusively indicated by noisily wedging her way past it to place the coffee-cup at her master's right hand. It was patent to both of them that the shorter way was by the left side of the table, but if she had seen fit to crawl under the obstacle or over it with a cup of coffee in each hand, to all appearances Margrave would not have noticed the process.

Christmas came and passed; the horse remained. Apparently its owner had forgotten it. Anna began to chuckle over the animal and to grow pleasantly familiar with it. "'Pears to me, honey, it looks like you come to stay, and stay right dar, jess where you is, trippin' up 'spectable colored folks." She gradually took off its wrappings, until one morning the magnificent charger stood with all his charms revealed.

Margrave made no comment, but after breakfast, when Anna had left the dining-room, he bestowed on the animal a prolonged hold stare, which gradually melted into a softer radiance of expression, and Margrave had withdrawn from the world

of sense into that dream-country from whose bourn no sane man, he thought, need wish to return.

Margrave's escapes into his dream-country were not always indicative of bravery or poetic inspiration. This time he needed more room for the horse, a rider, some few conditions which were missing in the reality. The situation also was lacking in logical cohesiveness, which bored him to the point where one generally throws the blame on a neighbor. Here there was no neighbor, not the slightest motive for this extraordinary departure into—must he confess it?—the ridiculous. He could connect the object with no thought or fact which would help his mind to digest it. His few relatives had no children; he knew no small boy well enough to present him with a present of such magnitude. He certainly could not class it with *bric-à-brac*. It would be no object to a museum. As it was, he had no room for it in the apartment; there was absolutely no place to put it, except on the top of an unused refrigerator in the small back hall. How would he get it up there? Fancy himself and Anna hoisting a prancing wooden horse, five feet long and three or four high, a distance of six or seven feet in the air! It could lie on its side under the dining-room table, and a long cover could be provided for the table. It would be pointless to hang it on the wall. If he could only do something with it! Make a fanciful cupboard of it, for instance, a unique receptacle for books, pamphlets, or even overshoes; call it a "Canterbury."

As it was, it seemed only fit for Anna to talk to, and it was fast making a gibbering idiot of her, this toy—this one utterly unrelated object in the universe.

The cold perspiration broke out on the man's brow—he took these baths nightly now—and wearily closing the covers of the unread periodical lying on his lap, he went to bed.

With Margrave the matter was getting serious. It was beginning to tell on his nerves, to some extent on his appetite. He wanted to order Anna to serve his dinner, at least his breakfast and luncheon, in another room. This he could not do. He dreaded now to turn the corner of his street. To-day it had amounted almost to pain, the inserting of his key into the lock of the door. As he did so a thought suddenly flashed a liberating pos-

sibility through his mind. "Go abroad for a while," it said. Closing the door with a frank click that Anna was welcome to hear, he took half a dozen buoyant steps along the hall—and a Europe lay before him!

Astride the rocking-horse, swinging at the rate of sixty rocks a minute, sat a rider of most daring intrepidity. Such breathless energy, such simple, absolute control of a spirited animal, Margrave had never witnessed. The easy appropriation by a four-year-old of the latent possibilities of an object about to wreck the comfort of a man caused one of Hubert's smiles. The boy saw it and began riding all the faster.

The rider must have foreseen this rough ride, for he wore leather leggings. These, with his black velvet cap, produced a familiar impression on the bachelor's mind; and that sturdy square back, where had he seen it? The horse was suddenly brought to a standstill.

"P'raps I oughtn't to be riding your horse. Is this your horse, sir? Mebbe it's your little boy's. Have you a little boy? Mebbe he wouldn't like me to be riding his horse. If you had a little boy, and this was his horse, would he let me ride it all the same?"

"I think he would," Margrave quietly replied, stepping into the dining-room as Anna made her exit by another door. He sat down near the table and slowly drew off his gloves. Suddenly he began to examine the ends of their fingers as though he saw something he did not altogether like.

The stratagem succeeded. The bird confidently hopped down from its perch and lit at the man's side. Instantly absorbed in the situation, he thrust his small nose physically into the object of investigation, to the total extinction of Margrave's chance to see anything but the back of a small head "running over with curls."

"Yes, sir! there's a hole coming, sure pop! You'll have to turn it wrong side out when you mend it—like this; this is the way my mother does."

The process of turning the long finger of the glove wrong side out to its tip took some time, and was not so easy as the boy supposed. Margrave did not interfere with the process; he preferred to delay the restless pressure of the warm little form against his own—this live bit of hard-breathing humanity. What a vital

summing up of world forces the tiny creature represented! and how simply and spontaneously the eternal messages were announcing themselves in these miniature ways, "as if his whole vocation were endless imitation" of "those truths which we are toiling all our lives to find"! How immediate his sympathy was! How trustful his spirit showed itself in an unfamiliar presence! How prodigal with his strength and service, even to his last breath! But

Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life!

Margrave roused himself from his reverie to find himself in turn an object of quiet, respectful observation.

"I think I must go. You see, they don't know where I am."

"Did they send you out on some errand?"

The boy looked up quickly from the gloves which he was pensively stroking as they lay on Margrave's knee, but encountering nothing suspicious in his host's expression, gave his attention again to the gloves, stealing a glance at the horse.

"No. You see, they don't send me out that way—yet." A long pause, in which mysterious underground currents were uniting these two, was broken by the boy's sudden question. "Do you want to see me just jump on that horse while it's going fast?"

"I should like to see you very much indeed."

A second's hesitation, and two arms were flung around Margrave's neck. A flash of memory, and the scene in the car made him understand the sense of familiarity with which he had been regarding his new friend.

Hubert took care not to extract all the sweets from the half-timid impulse, lest he visit its spirit too roughly and lose thereby the ground he had gained. He suppressed the longing to fold the boy close to his heart.

The scene that followed was certainly one to be viewed with bated breath.

The dining-room table stood against the wall of the room, leaving free space for the rider's venturesome spring. Margrave held the horse by the head, vainly trying to quiet him. His efforts only exasperated the animal, inciting him to madder and madder resistance. The

mighty form, with eyes glaring, mane streaming, tail flying, rears its length again and again in the air, only to dash its feet in unspent energy to the floor. A moment of preparation—and

I saw young Harry....
Rise from the ground like feather'd Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat,
As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds,
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.

"Bravo, sir! bravo! bravo! well done! I believe you are the only man I know who could control a horse like that. How should you like to own him?"

The boy slipped suddenly from the horse and tugged at his cap.

"I think I must go now. You know, they don't know *zactly* where I am. I guess mamma thinks I went out with Sarah, or Sarah thinks I am with mamma. You see, I wanted to see how high this house was. I saw your Anna—I asked her what her name was—hanging up clothes on the roof, and she said she would show me something nice. I must go now. We live right under you. Now I must—"

"One moment. You have not answered my question. Will you not let me give you this horse?"

"Then what will your own little boy have? I wish I could bring— Oh, *there's* my mamma now! She's ringing your bell—it sounds just like ours. She'll be awful worried about me. Can I run and call to her, and open the door? Yes! yes! Mamma, I'm in here!"

Margrave followed the boy quickly to the door, with no time for uneasy misgivings over the possible awkwardness of the coming encounter.

A low, anxious voice addressed him simply and immediately, "I beg pardon, but has my little boy strayed in here?"

At present there was nothing to meet but the anxious question of a mother, and to witness something in the nature of the street-car episode.

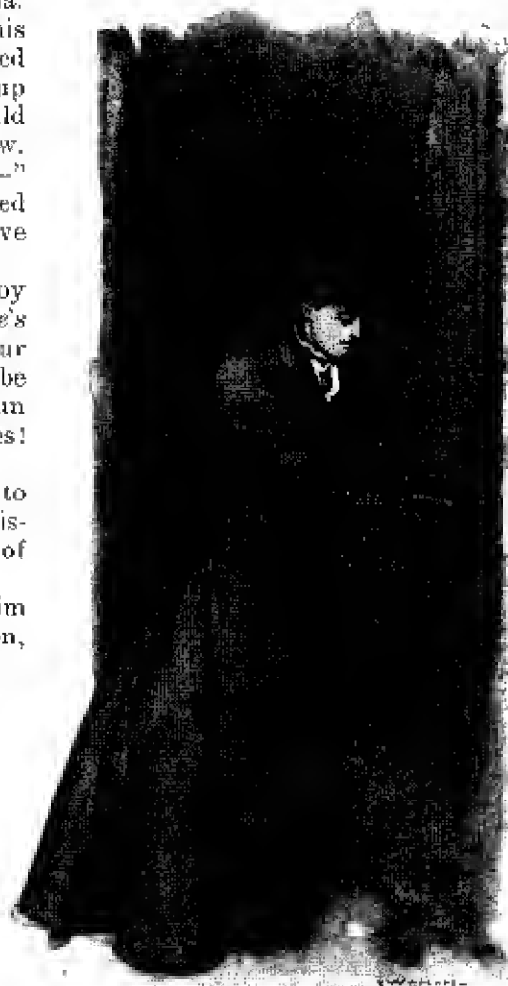
"Oh, can my mamma see that horse—*your* horse, I mean?"

Was it the simple directness of the child's insistence that made what followed so simple an affair? Can a child, by the mere pulling at a skirt, drag two people into a perfectly unheard-of social relation, and make it appear as natural and spontaneous as a family gathering? It might be the native simplicity of the woman, or

was it her perfect breeding that caused Margrave to feel so at his ease? He had no philosophy to account for the influence that was fast converting the occasion and the horse into soothing relations with his past and present.

They were standing close to the object of his recent misgivings, which might be construed now as an altar, so peaceful, so elevated was Margrave's new sense. Under its sway he was ready to kneel and lay upon the saddle, as upon a holy place, a flower, a blooming bough, a golden fruit, in recognition of the divine favor he felt descending upon him.

Under the magic of the boy priest's prattle every tiniest buckle and strap was made to connect and fasten a set of spiritual forces which bade fair to make this



"THERE'S MY MAMMA NOW."

"one utterly unrelated object in the universe" the connecting link between earth and a possible heaven; but of this Margrave was not aware. His immediate concern was with the boy, who, reassured by the familiar presence of his mother, was making up for lost time by a bevy of questions which, sparrowlike, would alight on an object to leave it, retiring only to come again. This movement without progress affected Margrave pleasantly. The secret response of his soul to the repressing touch of the mother's hand as it laid its dainty whiteness on the boy's shoulder was the wish that the investigation might extend itself to each hair in the mane and tail.

Once, as Margrave stooped down to show the real nails in the horse's shoes, the boy's mother asked herself why the profile was so familiar at this particular angle, and why it was associated with a feeling of admiration and confidence.

The impression ripened into a defined memory of a stormy evening in the late autumn when the rain, freezing as it fell, made it difficult for the pedestrian to keep his footing. She remembered that just as she was about to enter her door she heard an exclamation of alarm. Turning in its direction, she saw the form of a woman fall heavily to the pavement.

The street light revealed the face of one past middle age and belonging to the working class. Instantly a gentleman reached the side of the unfortunate soul and gently raised her to her feet. He listened patiently to what she was sobbingly trying to explain, and then stooped down and began to grope about the pavement, searching for the pennies that she had dropped. Securing them finally, he restored them to her benumbed fingers tied up in a fresh handkerchief. He hailed a passing cab, and helped her with some difficulty into it; a little more conversation, a direction given to the cabman, and the gentleman took the empty seat next to his charge, closed the door, and the cab drove away.

The knight-errant was Margrave.

He rose from his stooping posture, and confronted a face consciously blushing.

He took the hand that she frankly extended to him, and at her request to know to whom she was indebted for the pleasure her boy had received, gave his name.

"I hope that you will permit him to give me the pleasure again," Margrave

answered. "I can assure you nothing so simply delightful has happened to me for many years. The boy for whom the toy was bought I found had outgrown such things, and what was to have been a fine horse for him seems to have resolved into a white elephant for me."

"Yes, I'll come again. Won't we, mamma? Lots and lots of times!"

The boy kept his word.

Anna soon learned to know "Massa Sunshine's tappin's on de do' like dey wuz de sun a-crackin' de winter's ice." Her visitor usually came late in the afternoon when she was to be found in the dining-room, seated on a low Quaker chair, sewing. She would continue to sew between her trips, for she never travelled so far without leaving her seat, nor in so many different ways. Sometimes the rocking-chair was a carriage, and she was driven to a party, but only when she had on a bandanna. Once she wore a black turban, and in consequence was driven around the back streets in a wagon.

"I make no inquiriments, honey, but dese hansom trips wid de reins comin' up behind, liftin' off folk's spees and kerchiefs, I'low 's a little restless." One day, when the rocking-chair did duty as a train pushed from behind by the extemporized engine, she came very near going over on her face. "'Pears to me dat's mighty dangerous kind o' travellin', honey. I's too ole for dese elevatin' trips from behind."

In time the sunshine was to meet Margrave, and soon his days were all aflower. The light had lingered longer than usual one afternoon. It had flickered its pretty ways and joyous distraction over Anna's spare hour, and now stole across the threshold of the study door.

"Come in, my little man."

The boy ran up to the bachelor's knee and stood there. "You are good to let me come and play with your horse just whenever I like. Don't I?"

"Yes, dear boy," and Margrave lifted him to his knee. "How long do you suppose you could sit like that?" and Margrave took from the depths of his pocket a little ivory Hindoo god who had his legs crossed. "It is rather odd, you know, this little chap has a favorite tree named the Bo-tree. He likes to sit under that, but here he has been sitting for years under my bunch of keys. I suppose he has been wondering what has

been rubbing and jingling around his head in the dark."

"I bet he thinks it is the leaves rustling. What does he do under his tree?"

"Oh, he likes to think and think and think. I'll put him on the table. Wait a moment; we will twist a little tree for him out of this bit of paper—so! Now we will watch him think. Do you think he looks sleepy? Perhaps he will stretch his legs out."

The room was very quiet. The little Buddha began stretching his legs out, first only a little way, and then farther and farther, until his feet were lost to view. The boy was asleep. From his relaxed hand fell a crumpled card, "*Mrs. Horace Prescott, Wednesdays in —.*" "This is a part of my dream, too," thought Margrave, as he realized the boy's errand.

Gathering his burden more carefully in his arms, he passed with it out of the room, descended the stairs, rang the bell at the hall door beneath his own, and gave the child to the maid.

A week after, Margrave received the following note:

"DEAR MR. MARGRAVE,—Will you be so good as to come and see my little boy? Since he last saw you he has been confined to his bed, and after an anxious week for me has become reassuringly exacting in his demands, and insists upon seeing you. If you can find it convenient to come between four and five o'clock this afternoon, we shall be glad to see you.

Sincerely yours,

MARY PRESCOTT."

After this Margrave took no more walks alone in the Park. It was spring-time when the boy first began to be his daily companion; it was early summer when the mother joined them.

All the fine consciousness of this new experience, this sense of perfect living, might have impressed Margrave as unfamiliar, had the re-

ality not corresponded with one of his manhood's earliest and most persistent dreams. There was a strange naturalness in finding himself strolling quietly through wooded vistas in the early evenings of June with this woman, and the child playing about their footsteps was simply a part of the old picture. As he could talk to the companion of his dreams, so in time could he talk to this one.

Margrave's mental habit of escaping from a fact into the idea it might symbolize had free play in the intercourse, but was attended with widely different results for himself. His Pegasus, instead of soaring off into the air with its rider, suffered itself to be bridled by the practical interpretation of the woman's mind.

Perhaps if the winged steed had caught sight of the golden bridle of Minerva ear-



"SHE WAS DRIVEN TO A PARTY WHEN SHE HAD ON A BANDANNA."

lier in its career, Margrave might never have had to return to his native element on the back of a rocking-horse.

Intellectually, the new direction given to his thoughts, this sense of a presence at his head, gave him vivid delight. He had so long detached himself from persons, life had so long worn a dream aspect to him, that there was a pleasure almost physical in the exchange of ideas with another. He found himself wilfully plunging into the speculative empyrean in order to realize anew the pull of the imagined hand at the bridle. With the historical lover, he would "be plucked back again, so loving-jealous of his liberty" was he becoming.

Appreciating perfectly the unusual circumstances attending their intercourse, it distressed his sense of delicate chivalry to find himself speculating as to her possible personal feeling for him. He meant to appropriate what the companionship held for him disinterestedly, keeping it high in the air; the impression that he was feeling after it with both hands was not agreeable to him. The hand she had laid for a second on his arm yesterday was only to attract his attention hastily to a passing object she wanted him to see; this he knew; but it lay there yet, radiating a bright light—a warm, living thing. It was not so much the thoughts that she expressed as the warm little facts in which they clothed themselves, that staid by him—a certain smile; a tormenting far-off expression that the eyes wore at times; then a loving, sympathetic expression of the face—why need it include the whole race in its solicitude?

It was natural that the sunlight of his new experience should touch the land of his personal needs first. Their coast-line extended farther into the unexplored sea of the life about him than Margrave suspected. He had no idea of the extent of the exposure of his port of human sympathy, or of its harboring capacity. If his mother knew, she had kept him in ignorance regarding it, perhaps had hung out the danger-signal, to be seen from the sea as well as shore, and so prevented the landing of stray passengers with inconvenient tidings of the beauty and variety of the world outside.

Margrave, however, was approaching his new birth in many directions; his circuit was to be as comprehensive as it was personal. The light which began by

closing around himself gradually expanded its beneficent, illuminating power until all humanity came under its protection, as if it, like the sun, owed a fulfilment of a promise to every living thing.

They were standing late one afternoon before the beauty and luxuriant growth of a wistaria-vine, which, empurpling the broad spaces beneath two tall trees, ascended with its pendulous glories higher and higher to the heights beyond, like a voice that soars and will not be stilled.

"How perfectly that vine tells me the difference between us!" Margrave said to her. "Before you soar you enrich the spaces below; your sense of debt to mankind and to yourself began duty the moment it saw the light; whereas I must have been selfishly flowering in mid-air. The world of the human, you know, practically has never existed for me."

"I am not so sure of that," she replied, recalling the incident she had witnessed on the rainy cold night when he had cared for the poor old woman.

"That case was sporadic. She existed for me a half-hour, and then did not exist. No; every living thing seems to have more life for me than individuals. I am amazed, in a crowd of people, to find how instinctively they resolve into automations, mere walking machines. I always feel if I could reach half a dozen bottom motives, and press them as one does an electric button, all these people would do exactly the same thing; and the one spring actuating all is self-interest."

They walked on in silence for a little while after this.

"When you have been up in the air, what have you made of the earth beneath?" she asked.

"Imagined outlines and figures which you are gradually teaching me to believe conform to nothing in any known terrestrial or psychical geography. My descents to earth, I must allow, have not been attended with comfort, except as children, animals, and flowers have beckoned me. I seem to become perfectly direct, simple, and normal at such times, and live a kind of sublimated existence, purely objective, purely delightful. I shall talk too much, too far, unless you interrupt me."

"I shall not interrupt you."

"Well, then, I have been living on the heights, or in these dear, simple valleys, in a pure state of starvation. I starve

when I am too high; I starve when I come down to earth; each state emphasizes a void in my heart, a void that leaves me helpless and hopeless. I seemed a creature made for neither land nor sky—pity me, for you think it all shows weakness—until I met you; when I met you—you see, I talk too far—I—you might as well know the shabby truth—I wanted rest, or—oblivion, and I was beginning to think there were but two ways of reaching them—with Buddha, to think myself into them, become more isolated and useless than ever; or with Hamlet, to take arms against the sea of troubles and end them!

"Knowing you, learning new values from you, restored to life by you, I realized that the presence of death in my life was caused by the absence of the human interest in it. For the last month, for the first time in my life, I live. I think you will realize the fulness of the vitality your thought and influence have for me, and appreciate the quality of it, when I confess to you that despite the fact that I see but one door of happiness for me—the abiding presence of yourself in my life—I would forego realizing this priceless boon sooner than the desire and determination you have formed within me, to consecrate the remainder of my life to the cause of humanity. I awake, but as a statue might awake, knowing not how to adapt itself to the new reality.

"I have eyes now that can see. I have ears that hear. My heart yearns, but how to make these heart-beats tell, how to begin living from this new-found centre, I know not. I only know there must be no more cloud-land—no more of that fatal self-distrust."

They had reached the bridge, and stood overlooking the pond and the western heavens. A broad belt of clear sky lay like a placid brow over the horizon and the irregular features of the landscape.



"THEY STOOD OVERLOOKING THE WESTERN HEAVENS."

Above it, as though banished from a paradise, soft dark clouds were drawing themselves reluctantly away, leaving great reaches of peaceful space on every side.

If the man felt his heart expanding to admit all humanity into its love and care, the woman, as she regarded the thoughtful face above her illuminated into positive beauty by the humanized spiritual light that possessed it, felt hers contract to the point of pain around the realization of what this one life and its happiness had become to her.

"He has gained the impersonal peace," she thought; "the spaces of his future life await the dawn of new interests; while I, like the clouds, am banished. The very light I longed to have him see has become my night."

Vowed to his new purpose, his spirit free at last to hear other calls than those of his own heart, Margrave turns with radiant, far-seeing eyes to look into those he loves, to seek there a no more personal assurance than that of interested sympathy in the work of the new life about to open before him. He would take her hands to find in their answering pressure only an expression of faith in him. He takes them to find but a listless response to his hope; the eyes reflect poorly the

white light of general sympathy his ask. The woman heart, before so brave, so capable of leading and sustaining, succumbs openly to the conflicting forces suddenly raging within its walls. Lest her trembling hands betray her, she would withdraw them from the tightening grasp; the sweet face averted would hide its tell-tale color.

"Mary!" He fastens her hands in a close grasp, and gently draws her figure around to face his. "What is this you have for me in your heart, dear—look me in the eyes, nay, give them to me bravely—is it more or less than I ask?"

"Oh, Hubert, more—you must know! How foolish, how weak I am!" The eyes lower their glance, but the hands lie quietly in his.

Margrave lifted the lovely face up between his hands, while the soul in his eyes visited slowly every line of its sweet make.

"Must know," he mused, repeating her words, "how long I've prayed for one little sign of that weakness which meant, it seemed to me, the one vivifying spark of life by which I was to live! But you gave me not the slightest assurance of any more personal salvation at your hands than you had for the rest of the race of mankind. Mary, Mary, how could you lead me so far afield when I was so tired, longed so to stop just once, to have one little draught of personal tenderness at your hands? Now, dear soul, tell me—all this time how has it fared with your wings? Did they never tire of their endless flight? Not once asked to be folded down like this?"

"Ah, Hubert," she replied, "sometimes a lonely woman's surest peace is in sustained flight. It keeps the hunger out. I could not rest except—"

He finished the sentence for her his way.